

Appl. No. 09/932,900

Supplemental Amendment and Response to Final Office Action  
Reply to Final Office Action of Nov. 2, 2004

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (currently amended) In an apparatus for treating cytological or histological specimens, said apparatus having multiple processing stations and a transport device for delivering said specimens into and out of said processing stations, a loading station for loading with specimens or object carriers carrying said specimens, and a removal station for removing said treated specimens or said object carriers carrying said treated specimens, the improvement comprising:
  - said loading station being embodied as a drawer capable of being opened and closed with respect to said apparatus, said drawer having peripheral sidewalls and a bottom wall connecting said peripheral sidewalls; and
  - a plurality of processing stations allocated to said loading station, wherein the number of processing stations in said plurality of allocated processing stations is selected by a user and can be varied.
2. (canceled)
3. (previously presented) The improvement as defined in Claim 1, wherein up to four processing stations can be allocated to said loading station.
4. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 1, wherein said plurality of processing stations comprises selectable processing stations each having a specific function.
5. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 1, wherein said plurality of processing stations are allocated to said loading station by means of said transport device.

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6. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 1, wherein said plurality of processing stations can be allocated manually to said loading station.
7. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 6, wherein said plurality of processing stations are bolted onto said loading station.
8. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 6, wherein said plurality of processing stations are clamped onto said loading station by means of a bracket.
9. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 1, wherein said plurality of processing stations are embodied as containers for said object carriers.
10. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 1, wherein said loading station is equipped with sensors for detecting the presence of processing stations therein.
11. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 10, wherein said sensors identify the number of processing stations in said plurality of processing stations.
12. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 1, wherein said loading station is equipped with sensors for detecting the presence of said object carriers located in said plurality of processing stations.
13. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 12, wherein said sensors identify the number of object carriers in said plurality of processing stations.
14. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 12, wherein the occupancy of said object carriers present in said loading station is indicated acoustically.
15. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 12, wherein the occupancy of said object carriers present in said loading station is indicated optically.

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16. (canceled)
17. (previously presented) The improvement as defined in Claim 1, wherein said drawer is automatically openable and closable.
18. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 1, wherein said object carriers are loaded from said plurality of processing stations in said loading station to desired ones of said multiple processing stations of said apparatus by said transport device.
19. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 1, wherein said transport device is embodied as a robot arm having a gripper located at an end thereof.
20. (currently amended) In an apparatus for treating cytological or histological specimens, said apparatus having multiple processing stations and a transport device for delivering said specimens into and out of said processing stations, a loading station for loading with specimens or object carriers carrying said specimens, and a removal station for removing said treated specimens or said object carriers carrying said treated specimens, the improvement comprising:
  - said removal station being embodied as a drawer capable of being opened and closed with respect to said apparatus, said drawer having peripheral sidewalls and a bottom wall connecting said peripheral sidewalls; and
  - a plurality of processing stations allocated to said removal station, wherein the number of processing stations in said plurality of processing stations is selected by a user and can be varied.
21. (canceled)
22. (previously presented) The improvement as defined in Claim 20, wherein up to four processing stations can be allocated to said removal station.

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23. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 20, wherein said plurality of processing stations comprises selectable processing stations each having a specific function.
24. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 20, wherein said plurality of processing stations are allocated to said removal station by means of said transport device.
25. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 20, wherein said plurality of processing stations can be allocated manually to said removal station.
26. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 25, wherein said plurality of processing stations are bolted onto said removal station.
27. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 25, wherein said plurality of processing stations are clamped onto said removal station by means of a bracket.
28. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 20, wherein said plurality of processing stations are embodied as containers for said object carriers.
29. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 20, wherein said removal station is equipped with sensors for detecting the presence of processing stations therein.
30. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 29, wherein said sensors identify the number of processing stations in said plurality of processing stations.
31. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 20, wherein said removal station is equipped with sensors for detecting the presence of said object carriers located in said plurality of processing stations.
32. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 31, wherein said sensors identify the number of object carriers in said plurality of processing stations.

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33. (previously presented) The improvement as defined in Claim 31, wherein the occupancy of said object carriers present in said removal station is indicated acoustically.
34. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 31, wherein the occupancy of said object carriers present in said removal station is indicated optically.
35. (previously presented) The improvement as defined in Claim 33, wherein complete filling of said removal station, and thus the need for removal, is indicated acoustically.
36. (previously presented) The improvement as defined in Claim 34, wherein complete filling of said removal station, and thus the need for removal, is indicated optically.
37. (canceled)
38. (previously presented) The improvement as defined in Claim 20, wherein said drawer is automatically openable and closable.
39. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 20, wherein said object carriers are loaded from desired ones of said multiple processing stations of said apparatus to said plurality of processing stations in said removal station by said transport device.
40. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 20, wherein said transport device is embodied as a robot arm having a gripper located at an end thereof.

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41. (previously presented) In a system having a plurality of sequentially arranged apparatuses for treating cytological or histological specimens, each said apparatus having multiple processing stations and a transport device for delivering said specimens into and out of said processing stations, a loading station for loading with specimens to be treated or object carriers carrying said specimens to be treated, and a removal station for removing said treated specimens or said object carriers carrying said treated specimens, the improvement comprising:

said transfer device being operable to transfer said object carriers from an upstream apparatus to the apparatus with which said transport device is associated.

42. (previously presented) The improvement as defined in Claim 41, wherein said transfer device is further operable to transfer said object carriers from the apparatus with which said transport device is associated to a downstream apparatus.

43. (original) The improvement as defined in Claim 41, wherein said apparatuses in said system are connected to communicate data with one another, whereby treatment of said specimens can be synchronized.